

**What is Claimed:**

1. A method of preventing or treating West Nile virus in a human comprising administering to the human an effective amount of ribavirin.
2. A method in accordance with claim 1, wherein the ribavirin is administered orally.
3. A method in accordance with claim 2, wherein the ribavirin is administered in an amount from about 300 mg to about 3600mg/day.
4. A method in accordance with claim 2, wherein the ribavirin is administered in an amount of 1200mg as an initial dose, then 600mg every 6 hours.
5. A method of preventing or treating West Nile virus in an animal suffering therefrom comprising administering to the animal an effective amount of interferon alpha-2b.
6. A method in accordance with claim 5, wherein the animal is a human.
7. A method in accordance with claim 6, wherein the interferon alpha-2b is administered parenterally to the human.
8. A method in accordance with claim 7, wherein the interferon alpha-2b is administered in an amount from about 1.5 million units to about 10 million units/day.
9. A method in accordance with claim 7, wherein the interferon alpha-2b is administered in an amount of 3 million units as an initial dose, then 3 million units every 12 to 24 hours.
10. A method of treating or preventing West Nile virus in an animal suffering therefrom comprising administering to the animal an effective amount of ribavirin and interferon alpha-2b.
11. A method in accordance with claim 10, wherein the animal is a human.

12. A method in accordance with claim 11, wherein the ribavirin is administered orally and the interferon alpha-2b is administered parenterally to the human.

13. A method in accordance with claim 12, wherein the ribavirin is administered to the human in an amount from about 300 mg to about 3600mg/day and the interferon alpha-2b is administered in an amount from about 1.5 million units to about 10 million units/day.

14. A method in accordance with claim 13, wherein the ribavirin is administered to the human in an amount of 1200mg as an initial dose, then 600mg every 6 hours.

15. A method in accordance with claim 13, wherein the interferon alpha-2b is administered to the human in an amount of 3 million units as an initial dose, then 3 million units every 12 to 24 hours.

16. A method of preventing or treating an animal with an infection, comprising:  
administering to the animal an effective amount of ribavirin, interferon alpha-2b or combinations thereof, wherein the infection causes an encephalitis selected from the group consisting of St. Louis, Japanese, and Murray Valley.